

Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

CCO-00 IO-14 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00

NSAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 /113 R

DRAFTED BY INR/REA/SA:SASMITH

APPROVED BY INR/REA:WCHAMILTON

EA/LC:LMRIVES (IN SUBSTANCE)

----- 073708

R 090035Z NOV 73 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

S E C R E T STATE 221175

NO FOREIGN DISSEM TOSEC264 - ZFF ISLAMABAD ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS 5B(1)(2)

TAGS: CB, PINT, PFOR

SUBJECT: SIHANOUK: MORE THAN EVER INDISPENSABLE

ISLAMABAD FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

PARIS FOR JEC

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF INR ANALYSIS.

1. RECENT EXCHANGES BETWEEN SIHANOUK AND THE KHMER COMMUNISTS (KC) REVEAL MORE CLEARLY THAN EVER THAT, DESPITE THEIR VERY UNEASY RELATIONSHIP, THEY STILL RECOGNIZE THEIR SECRET

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INTERDEPENDENCE. CULMINATING IN THE "LE MONDE" INTERVIEW

OF OCTOBER 27 AND KHIEU SAMPHAN'S BIRTHDAY MESSAGE TO THE PRINCE, THESE EXCHANGES ALSO SUGGEST TACIT KC ACQUIESCENCE IN SIHANOUK'S DESIRE TO TAKE SOME KIND OF NEGOTIATING INITIATIVE.

2. A SMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP. THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN SIHANOUK AND THE KC HAS BEEN STRAINED FROM THE BEGINNING. THE KC DO NOT WHOLLY TRUST THE PRINCE AND ALMOST CERTAINLY RECOGNIZE THAT THEY COULD MORE EASILY DENY HIM A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IF THEY COULD WIN MILITARILY. SIHANOUK, ON THE OTHER HAND, RECOGNIZES THAT A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION WOULD

ENHANCE HIS POLITICAL PROSPECTS.

3. NEVERTHELESS, COMMUNIST ADVANCES WITHIN CAMBODIA OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS LAID THE BASIS FOR SIHANOUK'S RECENT INTERNATIONAL GAINS, AMONG WHICH ARE AN INCREASE FROM 36 COUNTRIES RECOGNIZING HIS REGIME (GRUNK) IN MAY TO A PRESENT TOTAL OF AT LEAST 48, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION; AND GOOD PROSPECTS FOR A FAVORABLE VOTE IN THE UN CREDENTIALS BATTLE. AT THE SAME TIME, SIHANOUK'S CLAIMS TO LEGITIMACY, THE RESPECT HE STILL COMMANDS AMONG THE KHMER, PARTICULARLY THE PEASANTS, AND HIS DIPLOMATIC AGILITY HAVE BEEN MAJOR ASSETS FOR THE KC IN CAMBODIA AND THE WORLD AT LARGE.

4. SIHANOUK UP, KC DOWN. OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, WHILE SIHANOUK'S INTERNATIONAL STOCK HAS BEEN GOING UP, THE KC'S INTERNAL POSITION HAS DECLINED. THEY WERE UNABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON THE US BOMBING HALT, AND FAILED IN THEIR MAJOR EFFORT TO TAKE AND HOLD THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF KOMPONG CHAM. HANOI HAS NOT PROVIDED THE KIND OF SUPPORT THE KC NEED TO WIN A DECISIVE VICTORY. AND FRICTION BETWEEN THE KC AND THE NVA/VC AT THE LOCAL LEVEL HAS BEEN INCREASING, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES BORDERING ON SOUTH VIETNAM.

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5. PUBLICLY, SIHANOUK HAS PLAYED HEAVILY ON DARKENED MILITARY PROSPECTS, WITHOUT DEPARTING FROM HIS ADAMANT REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PRESENT KHMER REPUBLIC LEADERS. PRIVATELY, HE HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN NEGOTIATIONS, AND HAS SUGGESTED THAT ONLY HIS LEADERSHIP PROVIDES ANY HOPE FOR AN INDEPENDENT CAMBODIA. HE HAS COMMUNICATED TWO MESSAGES TO THE KC--THAT THEY MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THEY CANNOT WIN MILITARY VICTORY ANY TIME SOON

AND THEREFORE NEED HIM MORE THAN EVER. BY HIS RECENT THREAT TO RESIGN, SIHANOUK HAS POINTEDLY REMINDED HIS IN-COUNTRY COLLEAGUES OF HIS UTILITY. MEANWHILE, HANOI AND PEKING, FOR DIFFERING REASONS, ARE PROBABLY NOT AVERSE TO STEPS THAT COULD LEAD TO NEGOTIATIONS.

6. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE REACTED SHARPLY TO THE PRINCE'S MESSAGES. IN HIS OCTOBER 26 BIRTHDAY GREETING TO SIHANOUK, GRUNK MINISTER OF DEFENSE KHIEU SAMPHAN EMPHASIZED THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE PRINCE AND THE KC, AND SIHANOUK'S POSITION AS THE OVER-ALL LEADER. SIHANOUK HAS PERFORMED

"BRILLIANTLY" IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA; THE KC HAVE EQUALLY SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE WITHIN CAMBODIA. BOTH, KHIEU SAMPHAN PREDICTS, WILL SCORE EVEN MORE BRILLIANT VICTORIES IN THE FUTURE.

7. A NEW UNDERSTANDING. STRESSING AS IT DOES THAT EACH PARTNER SHOULD CARRY ON HIS PART OF THE STRUGGLE, THE GREETING SEEMS TO GIVE SIHANOUK CONSIDERABLE LEEWAY IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA, WHILE THE KC SIMULTANEOUSLY PRESS THEIR EFFORTS TOWARD VICTORY ON THE HOME FRONT. THUS A TALK-FIGHT STANCE HAS EMERGED AS AN ACCEPTABLE TACTIC FOR EACH OF THE UNEASY PARTNERS FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

8. FOR HIS PART, SIHANOUK NOW SEEMS TO BE SEEKING A DIA-LOGUE THAT WOULD ENHANCE HIS ROLE. THE CHINESE CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT HIM. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, GIVEN THEIR PRIORITIES, SHOULD NOT BE A HINDRANCE. RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE221175
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: SASMITH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731143/aaaabftx.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25-Jul-2001 by kellew0>; APPROVED <26-Nov-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SIHANOUK: MORE THAN EVER INDISPENSABLE ISLAMABAD FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CB
To: PARIS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005